

Written evidence

Members of the Oracy APPG will consider written, verbal and audio-visual evidence and oversee oral evidence sessions. All evidence will inform the final report.

The extended deadline for submitting written evidence is 20th September 2019. We would appreciate if the submissions would follow the following guidelines:

- Be in a Word format
- No longer than 3000 words
- State clearly who the submission is from, and whether it is sent in a personal capacity or on behalf of an organisation
- Begin with a short summary in bullet point form
- Have numbered paragraphs
- Where appropriate, provide references

Please write your evidence below and email the completed form via email to inquiry@oracyappg.org.uk with the subject line of 'Oracy APPG inquiry'

Full name:

School or Organisation:

Role:

Written evidence:

The below comments in response to the Oracy Parliamentary Inquiry are submitted on behalf of Tudor Grange Academies Trust, a Midlands based MAT consisting of ten schools; five secondary, one all through academy and four primary academies.

Oracy is our ability to communicate effectively using the spoken language

1. Value and Impact

What is the impact of oracy education at different life stages from early years through to employment, and how can the delivery of effective oracy education contribute to individual and societal outcomes?

- 1.1. The ability to express yourself effectively; to speak eloquently, articulate ideas and thoughts, influence through talking, listen to others and have the confidence to express your views is a vital life skill. Young people at all stages of education need opportunities to practise this skill in order to become effective communicators.
- 1.2. Placing more of an importance on oracy education at all life stages needs to start in the home environment. Some of the schools in the Tudor Grange Academies Trust are proactive in providing advice and guidance to parents about how this can best be done at home and how this might explicitly link to better outcomes for their children.
- 1.3. At Key Stage 4 and 5 where young people are preparing for the next stages of their education or employment, a focus on good oracy is essential. Preparing students for interviews is a key part of careers education.

2. Provision and access

What is the current state of provision of oracy education across the UK, who is missing out and what factors create unequal access to oracy education?

- 2.1. The development of smart technology and the earlier introduction of this technology to children and young people has led to a reduction in the focus on good communication skills. Tudor Grange Academies Trust is committed to providing phone free environments for young people to increase the focus on good spoken communication and listening skills.
- 2.2. Over recent years, oracy education has not been a focus for schools, students or parents and this is partly due to the fact that it is not explicitly assessed. The removal of the speaking and listening element of GCSE English together with the increased demand of the GCSE and the increased focus on written communication has reduced the amount of time that schools are spending on developing oracy skills in young people. Whilst reading is explicitly mentioned in the new ofsted framework, oracy is notably absent. Without an explicit focus in headline measures, assessments or quality assurance of provision by external bodies (ofsted), schools are not going to prioritise these skills.
- 2.3. Disadvantaged students and those with SEND are amongst the students that are most likely to have unequal access to oracy development and this starts from being at

home in the family. Within Tudor Grange Academies Trust, 'Talk for Writing' has been used specifically with students of lower ability. Whilst the focus of this work has been to improve writing, the vehicle for doing this has been through improving oracy skills.

- 2.4. Despite the barriers, some schools retain an oracy focus through elements of the curriculum in the belief that it remains a crucial skill in language development. Within the Tudor Grange family of schools, there are clear opportunities for students to improve their oracy skills. At KS3 and KS4 these opportunities are most likely to be part of the wider curricular offer and include participation in debating societies, young magistrates, youth parliaments, Model United Nations, Voice 21 and Speak Out competitions. At all key stages students are encouraged to express their views by being part of student councils and student executives.
- 2.5. The focus on speaking and listening and communication and language development is most evident within the early years settings in the Trust as this forms part of the seven areas of learning. Students at this stage are encouraged to communicate ideas effectively, re-tell stories and resolve conflict through speech. Moving into KS1, the focus switches to phonics and the end of key stage statutory assessment and perhaps this is sometimes at the expense on the focus on oracy skills.
- 2.6. Teachers within the Trust have noted how confident students are in early years and KS1 at expressing their views and how willing they are to speak confidently in front of different audiences. This confidence reduces as students get older and the importance of providing regular opportunities for students to do this is key.
- 2.7. Teaching mathematics through mastery is an approach used across the Trust both in primary and secondary settings. The focus on precision of language is important and encourages students to develop good oracy skills.
- 2.8. In primary settings across the Trust, the 'power of reading' is used. This encourages students to talk about books and reading and develops confidence for young students to express their views through speech.
- 2.9. There has been a focus on vocabulary at all stages of education and students in Tudor Grange schools use sophisticated vocabulary widely. There is an increasing need to change the focus of this work to using vocabulary effectively in speech, rather than in writing as this will enable students to better articulate ideas and thoughts and to influence others through talking.
- 2.10. In secondary provision across the Trust there is a commitment to encouraging students to become better communicators. Some of the strategies used include:
 - a focus on oral responses during in class discussions using full sentences rather than single word or brief responses
 - weekly debate and discussion focussed on reading in tutor time as a whole school focus
 - EAL students guided in developing debating skills as a primary source of literacy acquisition
- 2.11 Paired discussion in class used as a key teaching method. Students rehearse responses in pairs before sharing with the whole class

2.12 Within English lessons, speaking and listening remains a key focus. Teachers focus on building reading and writing skills through debate and discussion of meaning, and structuring creative and analytical writing. Class discussions are formalised using the add / develop / challenge structure to promote good oracy.

3 Barriers to improving oracy education

What are the barriers to provision of a quality oracy education for all, and what is the role of the Government and other bodies in incentivising provision?

3.11 Lack of high quality CPD in this area is a factor and the inclusion of this in teaching training and for teachers early in their career would improve confidence and lead to better provision. Tudor Grange Academy SCITT programme for early years, primary and secondary has oracy education embedded into the professional studies element of the provision, ensuring that student teachers have the background theory and a toolkit to embed good practice into their own teaching.

3.12 The Government is key in encouraging schools to focus on improving oracy education for young people. There is a lack of communication from the DfE to schools and parents and how good oracy skills contribute to good end of key stage outcomes and therefore, life chances for young people.

3.13 NHS Speech and Language services have greatly diminished over recent years, with therapists outsourcing much of the therapeutic work they used to do to school staff who do not have the same level of expertise in this area. SALT tend to be more involved with children at Key Stage 1, but seem very quick to discharge, particularly before children reach Key Stage 2. By the time a child reaches secondary school therefore, any speech and language difficulty needs to be severe and usually named as a primary need on an EHCP before they receive any input and support from external agencies. Even then input is often tokenistic, with reviews being conducted once or twice a year, but with no sustained intervention being offered. Again, the SALT provision named in Section F of many EHCPs is having to be predominantly led by untrained school staff.

3.14 Secondary school staff are not as skilled in the identification of speech and language needs. This is partly due to a lack of focus on and exposure to these types of need during teacher training, and partly because by this age children have developed masking strategies that mean they are more likely to 'go under the radar'. Additionally, staff at secondary schools see much less of individual children in comparison to the time a class teacher would spend with children at primary. For those children who are identified as having a need, waiting times for new referrals to be picked up are very variable and whilst recommendations are provided to schools through a report following an initial assessment, again there is no ongoing or long-term intervention offered from SALT services, meaning that, unless a school employs a specialist teacher in this area, the support they are able to offer has very little impact.

Additional guidance:

Value and impact

1. Given many teachers recognise the importance of oracy, why does spoken language not have the same status as reading and writing in our education system? Should it have the same status, and if so why?
2. What are the consequences if children and young people do not receive oracy education?
3. What is the value and impact of quality oracy education at i) different life stages, ii) in different settings, and iii) on different types of pupils (for instance pupils from varied socioeconomic backgrounds or with special educational needs)?
4. How can it help deliver the wider curriculum at school?
5. What is the impact of quality oracy education on future life chances? Specifically, how does it affect employment and what value do businesses give oracy?
6. What do children and young people at school and entering employment want to be able to access, what skills do they want to leave school with?
7. What is the value and impact of oracy education in relation to other key agendas such as social mobility and wellbeing/ mental health?
8. How can the ability to communicate effectively contribute to engaging more young people from all backgrounds to become active citizens, participating fully in social action and public life as adults

Provision and access

1. What should high quality oracy education look like?
2. Can you provide evidence of how oracy education is being provided in different areas/education settings/extra-curricular provision, by teachers but also other practitioners that work with children?
3. What are the views of teachers, school leaders and educational bodies regarding the current provision of oracy education?
4. Where can we identify good practice and can you give examples?
5. What factors create unequal access to oracy education (i.e. socio-economic, region, type of school, special needs)? How can these factors be overcome?
6. Relating to region more specifically, how should an oracy-focused approach be altered depending on the context?

Barriers

1. What are the barriers that teachers face in providing quality oracy education, within the education system and beyond?
2. What support do teachers need to improve the delivery of oracy education?
3. What accountability is currently present in the system? How can we further incentivise teachers to deliver more oracy education to children and young people?
4. What is the role of government and other bodies in creating greater incentives and how can this be realised?
5. What is the role of assessment in increasing provision of oracy education? What is the most appropriate form of assessment of oracy skills?
6. Are the speaking and listening elements of the current curriculum sufficient in order to deliver high quality oracy education?

7. What is the best approach – more accountability within the system or a less prescriptive approach?
8. Are there examples of other educational pedagogies where provision has improved and we can draw parallels and learn lessons?